

Since that time, the Minority Health Task Force has basically completed its mission with the recent creation of the Office of Minority Health (OMH) and an advisory body, the Minority Health Advisory Council, in the Department of Environment, Health, and Natural Resources. Council members were sworn in December 15, 1992. Meanwhile, staff from the various health divisions of the department serve as liaison with the OMH. Together, the OMH and the Minority Health Advisory Council will work towards improving the health status of the state's minority populations by promoting and/or developing policies, programs, and services.

These groups, and many other individuals and organizations including the Commission of Indian Affairs, have requested race-specific analyses of the sociodemographic and health characteristics of the state's minorities. Thus, in 1992, the State Center requested and received funding from the Public Health Foundation to conduct these analyses and to establish a surveillance system that will enable them to be rapidly updated. This funding, in the amount of \$50,000 for one year, has recently been augmented by a \$15,000 grant-in-aid from the OMH and the Advisory Council.

One of the first questions asked by the Council was: *WHO* and *WHERE* are our minorities? The present report is a response that should also set the stage for forthcoming analyses of the health status of the state's African and Native American populations.

TECHNICAL NOTES

The data of this report are derived from resident birth and death registrations (to compute natural increase for the 1980s) and census enumerations.⁵ For 1990, census data reflect counts as originally enumerated. However, the Census Bureau has recently released a modified age-race-sex (MARS) file where "other race" designations (e.g., Spanish) have been distributed among four race groups: White, Black, American Indian/Eskimo/Aleut, and Asian/Pacific Islander.

The concept of race as used by the Census Bureau reflects self-identification by respondents; it does not denote any clear-cut scientific definition of biological stock. The data thus represent people according to the race with which they most closely identify.

In examining the data of this report, the reader should keep in mind that persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race and thus represent an ethnic and not a racial minority. Also, in examining the data for Hispanics, the reader should be aware of an apparent undercount of these persons, as discussed in the next section.

Several tables and figures in this report do not include data for Asians. This is due to (1) lack of comparability between 1980 and 1990 classification and coding systems and (2) lack of 1990 data specific for Asians.

In Figure 3, depicting the geographical distributions of the state's larger minority groups, county subdivisions (census tracts or block numbering areas) have been grouped into three categories according to the number of minority persons living in the subdivision. For each map, the three categories are approximately equal in terms of the number of subdivisions represented.

Definitions for a number of terms used in this report are found in the Glossary, pp. 11-14.

POPULATION COUNTS

Table 1 shows the race-specific numbers and percentages of North Carolina residents tabulated in the 1990 census. Table 2 provides counts and percentages for residents of Hispanic origin, who may be of any race. Although the Asian and Hispanic populations represent sizable numbers, they are shown to be of quite diverse backgrounds with no particular race/ethnic subgroup dominating the picture.

Although 76,726 persons of Hispanic origin were counted in 1990, the number of persons five and older who reported speaking Spanish or Spanish Creole at home numbered 105,963. This discrepancy suggests an undercount of Hispanics. In fact, persons who did not identify an Hispanic Origin category on the census form were not counted as Hispanics even though they may have written Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, etc. in the "Other race" category. However, at least some of the discrepancy is known also to reflect responses for non-Hispanic students of the Spanish language.

For many of the 1990 census indicators, data are reported for American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts as a group. However, as shown in Table 1, the number of